

Mr Speaker, nine years ago I said that I wanted to set in place a long-term framework for Britain's economic stability and prosperity. I started that process immediately by giving the Bank of England independence from political control.

Today I come to the House to take the first steps towards restoring trust in Government and reinvigorating the democratic process in Britain.

I am also announcing a still more ambitious goal: to set in place a long-term framework for Britain's future flourishing as a cohesive, democratic society, confident in its shared identity and secure in the face of the challenges we now face. I am publishing today a draft Statement of Rights and Responsibilities – which could provide the basis for a British Bill of Rights – and possibly point the way towards a written Constitution.

**[NB THIS TEXT ASSUMES THE FOLLOWING**

- I) THAT THE PM WOULD ANNOUNCE A PACKAGE OF "IMMEDIATE MEASURES" OF DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM INCLUDING A PREAMBLE TO THE HRA [AND POSSIBLY AN INTERPRETATIVE CLAUSE] WHICH WOULD CLARIFY THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY THAT ARE INHERENT IN THE HRA. ,**
- II) THAT THE PM WOULD STATE HIS INTENTION TO INTRODUCE A BRITISH BILL OF RIGHTS AND KICK OFF A NATIONAL AND REGIONAL 'DISCUSSION'/CONSULTATION ON THE "CORE VALUES" THAT ARE DEFINITIVE OF BRITISH DEMOCRACY WHICH WOULD INFORM THE PREAMBLE TO A BRITISH BILL OF RIGHTS,**
- III) THAT THIS SAME CONSULTATION PROCESS WOULD INVOLVE A SUBSTANTIVE 'DISCUSSION' ON THE CONTENT OF A BILL OF RIGHTS WHICH COULD INCLUDE RIGHTS THAT HAVE A PARTICULARLY BRITISH PEDIGREE (SUCH AS JURY TRIAL) AS WELL AS MORE 'MODERN' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES EXCLUDED FROM THE HRA (SUCH AS CARERS RIGHTS, RIGHTS**

**TO INDEPENDENT LIVING AND TO HEALTH CARE; SEE BACKGROUND PAPER). .**

**IV) THAT THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO CREATE A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION, IN WHICH A BILL OF RIGHTS COULD BE EMBEDDED, IS ALSO TO BE CANVASSED IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS, BUT THE DECISION ON WHETHER TO PROCEED WILL DEPEND ON RESPONSE.]**

The protections we afford to individuals and the rights and responsibilities of citizens have rightly been the subject of intense deliberation across the generations. They have been debated, affirmed and, on occasion codified in legislation.

But today I believe it is time to go further. I want to explain why.

There comes a time in the history of virtually every nation when the pressures to define the values that bind its people and communities together have become irresistible.

Often this has been on gaining independence from a colonial power, or after emerging from a period of civil war or dictatorship.

Britain, as a well established and relatively stable democracy, has been fortunate to have avoided such upheavals since the 17th century.

But there is now, in my view, a powerful case to say that we find ourselves in Britain at an historic place in time, standing at the confluence of so many currents all pushing us relentlessly towards a moment of national definition.

I believe that we need now to be able to state clearly and confidently what should bind us proudly together in the 21st century. The time has come to try to establish a lasting framework that will combine the best of the old and the new, and provide an engine for progress both at home and abroad.

I will mention just a few of the most important challenges which, together, have now led us to this point.

First, there is the shocking realisation that there are British people who are prepared to kill and maim large numbers of their fellow citizens as they travel to work or take their holidays.

This has forced us all to recognise that some people from the diverse cultures that make up modern Britain feel profoundly alienated from the country in which they live.

To address this alienation in a constructive and inclusive way, we need, as a starting point, a strong shared understanding of both the guarantees every individual can expect from the state, in terms of our rights and freedoms, and of the responsibilities we all owe to each other and to our community.

If we don't act now we leave the way open to the racists and xenophobes to continue to exploit the fears that insecurity breeds.

Second, there is the widely held view that the EU has become out of touch; that it is too remote and not sufficiently democratic.

People in Britain and across Europe were understandably concerned that the proposed EU Constitution seemed to be imposed on them, top-down, by politicians and bureaucrats.

In the context of continuing debate about a possible EU constitution, we need to articulate clearly what we in Britain have in common with our fellow members in the European Union. We also need to be clear about what defines our own sense of national purpose. And we need to decide for ourselves what distinctively British institutions and cultural values require protection in the context of an evolving European Union.

That way we can make sure that any EU constitution meets our needs as well as that of our fellow Europeans.

The current pause for reflection in the process of the construction of a European Constitution provides a particular opportunity – indeed, I would say, an urgent need – to do this.

Third, we must face up to the fact that there has been a dramatic public disengagement from participation in politics and civic life at every level.

Whatever may be the reasons, there is no disputing that a large proportion of the public perceive politicians to be untrustworthy; Government to be insufficiently accountable; and Parliament insufficiently effective in scrutinising the Government and holding it to account.

To overcome this feeling of disempowerment and alienation from the decision-making processes that affect people's everyday lives, we must find ways of reconnecting citizens to the local or national political processes that are essential to a vibrant democracy.

Fourth, domestic and international terrorism are not the only threats to our security and wellbeing.

We also face social and economic insecurities generated by global developments.

In today's globalised world, what happens in one country thousands of miles away frequently impacts on us at home. This brings many opportunities but can also enhance our sense of vulnerability, leading some to be attracted to the simplistic certainties peddled by extremist parties.

Probably the greatest of these global challenges flows from the consequences of climate change.

But they include the prospect of being left behind by the emerging economic superpowers of China and India.

And of course, there are also the many and complex questions which arise from the rapid pace of technical and scientific developments and changes across the world – such as biotechnology – which increasingly raise new ethical dilemmas.

It falls to all of us to react responsibly to these changing global conditions and developments.

And it falls to Government, in particular, to give a clear undertaking **[I.E. AS PART OF THE SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS IN A NEW BILL OF RIGHTS]** of its responsibility to provide the basic entitlements - including to education, training, housing and health care - which help make our society strong, vibrant and competitive in a global economy

If we are to face up to these sorts of global challenges, we need, as a starting point, a clear understanding of our obligations to each other, for example of our shared duty to act together to ensure a sustainable approach to the environment of our country and the planet.

I have mentioned four of the great challenges we face. Although each requires its own tailored response, the scale and scope of those challenges means that short-term and piecemeal policies are no longer enough. The common thread that runs through them is our need for national definition, a shared sense of common values and a reinvigorated democracy, robust enough to withstand the difficulties and dilemmas of our age. Together they call for a fresh and bold approach, coherent and long-lasting, following an open and inclusive process.

And so I believe that we have now reached a point in our history when it should be possible to reach broad agreement about what should be included in a new constitutional settlement: a modern bill of rights and possibly a written constitution that embody:

- the core values which define us, **[I.E. TO GO INTO THE PREAMBLE TO A BILL OF RIGHTS]**
- the principles and rules by which we would like to be governed: who decides what, and how **[I.E. A POSSIBLE WRITTEN CONSTITUTION]**, and
- the more concrete commitments that we have made, or need to make, as a society to give effect to those underlying values **[IE. WITHIN THE SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS IN A BILL OF RIGHTS]**.

Let me start by talking about the Core Values themselves.

I do not want to pre-empt in any way the process of discussion and consultation which I envisage, but it would be surprising if we did not agree that there are certain Core Values that define our democracy based on the principles of liberty, democracy, fairness and civic duty. We celebrate the



virtues of liberty and empowerment rather than self interested individualism; we believe in democratic values that include maximum control by an individual over the decisions which affect his or her life; we promote civic duty and the responsibilities we owe to each other as neighbours, grounded in the right of each citizen to be treated with respect and for their potential to be developed. And it reflects the distinctively British understanding of universal themes such as liberty, responsibility and fairness: **[NB THIS BIT NEEDS TO BE IN TRACK WITH THE PREAMBLE TO THE DRAFT CHARTER/BILL OF RIGHTS TO BE RELEASED AT THE SAME TIME AS AN ILLUSTRATION, ONLY, OF WHAT SUCH A BILL OF RIGHTS COULD LOOK LIKE.]**

- In Britain, liberty does not descend into individualism or crude libertarianism; it embraces tolerance and celebrates diversity without licensing extremism; and it recognises that there can be no true liberty without security in the broadest sense, including freedom from basic wants;
- Democracy does not just involve elections to parliament and accountable government but giving individuals as much control as possible over the decisions which affect their lives, in the communities in which they live.
- Fairness or fair play – a longstanding British value – include both the way decisions are made and the outcomes reached. It embraces the equal right of each and every citizen to be treated with dignity and respect and to have an equal opportunity to develop their potential.
- And finally civic duty embraces the responsibilities we owe to each other, to our communities and to future generations. Most people in Britain appreciate their responsibilities as well as their rights, and that includes giving back to the communities from which we all benefit.

If, as I believe they must, those Core Values are to underpin the way in which we behave, both as individuals and as members of communities, we need to recognise Government's responsibility in guaranteeing and securing them.

That requires a programme of changes.

In 1997, to restore trust in economic management, I surrendered the Government's power to set interest rates and created a new constitution for monetary and fiscal decision-making

Today, to restore trust in decision-making by public authorities I propose a new relationship between citizen and government

I seek to restore trust in public decision making and in the public realm by demanding that each public body sets out its objectives, becomes subject to clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and is required to be fully transparent and open.

I also set out specific reforms under which the Government will constrain or surrender its power in the interests of the individual citizen and their communities. **[NB LINKAGE HERE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROGRAMME?]**

Today I set out measures that by constraining the discretion of the executive enhance its accountability to Parliament and the people and strengthens the people's rights both as individuals and as members of a community.

The reforms and measures I propose are all founded in the Core Values I have described.

Some things we can start on straight away. Others will take a bit longer and require wider public involvement and engagement.

Let me deal first with the immediate steps before turning to the longer term process.

I am today announcing a number of measures which I propose to put in train immediately to begin to meet the challenges I have identified.

There are two themes to these immediate measures:

The first is about establishing a new relationship between the individual, their community and the state.

It involves re-establishing trust in Government and in the operation of due process.

It means the Government giving up power in the long term interest of the Country; it reflects the urgent need to redress the imbalance which many people believe has grown up between the Government and Parliament; and the urgent need to restore Parliament's vital role of holding the Government to account and to begin to restore trust in Government by increasing the accountability and transparency of the political system.

In order to take those things forward, I can announce the following today:

[NB TO BE DISCUSSED/AMENDED/RE-ORDERED; THIS LIST INCLUDES ALL THE SPECIFIC MEASURES SET OUT IN GB'S TEXT; THEY ARE ALL PART OF AN INITIAL PROGRAMME OF FURTHER CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM WHICH IS INTENDED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH, AND MAKE EASIER, THE PROCESS OF MOVING - IF DESIRED - TO A FORMAL WRITTEN CONSTITUTION IN DUE COURSE]

1. As part of the Government giving up powers, all remaining Government prerogative powers, including the use of armed force, declarations of war, and the making and ratification of international treaties, are to be surrendered to parliament.
2. To ensure that all departments of Government are accountable to the people, each department will be the subject of a debate in parliament on its annual statement objectives and plans, just as the Treasury is now through the budget.
3. To increase the transparency of the political process, prior to the second reading debate on all legislation, the Government will set out the purpose of each bill, publish a human rights impact assessment, and explain how it promotes the Core Values I have described
4. As part of restoring trust in our political system, the work and role of the Cabinet will be reinvigorated to reduce the perception of a presidential style of government
5. To restore public confidence in the independence and impartiality of the Government's legal advice, the Attorney General will in future be



independent of Government, appointed through the public appointments process, and accountable directly to Parliament

6. As part of reinvigorating our democracy and ensuring parliament is seen to represent all parts of society, reform of the second chamber of Parliament will be prioritised, including a clearer definition of that chamber's scrutiny powers.
7. Fundamental reform of the House of Lords is long overdue as part of the constitutional order for the future. In almost every country, a second chamber is a vital part of democracy but our system needs to be reformed and made fit for its modern purpose.
  - Two principles should govern the work of a reformed Upper House: the supremacy of the Lower House and the proper accountability of the Upper House.
  - On the basis of these principles, I propose that, over a ten year period, the Upper House moves to being wholly elected, either directly or indirectly.
  - The Upper House will be strengthened as the forum of the nations of the whole of the united kingdom
  - However, the Upper House should have no power over finance (were election to be agreed). But it is right that the Prime Minister and Ministers answer questions in the Upper House as well as the Lower House and I propose to offer the Upper House this innovation
8. In order to ensure that Government action is properly scrutinised, the powers of parliamentary Select Committees will be enhanced, by providing salaried chairs and greater resources for their scrutiny work.
9. All committees of the Houses of Parliament are to be accountable to Parliament. I will end the anomaly that makes the Intelligence and Security Committee a committee chosen by, and reporting to, the Prime Minister

10. In order to restore trust in Government, we are introducing significant changes to the transparency of Government's relationship with the media, to counter the damaging perception that Government announcements are dominated by "spin".
11. As part of the Government giving up power, we are establishing a Public Appointments Commission for constitutionally significant public appointments, enabling the Government to renounce its powers of patronage over appointments which should be made by an independent body.
12. Similarly, the Government will no longer be involved in the appointment of judges and others in similar positions.
  - Appointments of judges, Law Officers, bishops, will now be made according to strict parliamentary procedures with full accountability to parliament.
  - Ratification of appointments will be subject to parliamentary procedures.
  - We will agree where hearings are appropriate prior to ratification.
  - The Bank England's Monetary Policy Committee will be chosen by ???.
13. In order to restore trust in the political process, we will ensure greater clarity around the role of special advisers and ensure the independence of civil servants: I am abolishing the Orders in Council that give political advisers the power to instruct civil servants.
14. I am publishing a new contract for Ministers including a new Ministerial Code formally administered by impartial civil servants not the Prime Minister.
15. I am also open to fixed terms for parliament. But, as a first step, elections will in future be called only after the Government puts before Parliament a proposal that an election take place. The calling of elections will no longer be a matter for the discretion of the monarch or the Prime Minister but this body - the Lower House
16. For the same reason, further reforms to the public honours system and to the financing of political parties will be brought forward, to restore

public confidence in the integrity of the political process. Honours will be awarded by Parliament and the Government working together and in some cases by direct votes of the British people

17. The Prime Minister will present an annual State of the Nation report to parliament starting in January next year and covering all constituent parts of the United Kingdom and after agreement with the First Ministers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
18. To make sure that Government action properly furthers our shared Core Values, in advance of the Queen announcing the detail of the Government's legislative package in November, the Prime Minister will explain in July how the proposals contained in that package promote the Core Values I have identified. That should enable full, proper and timely debate to take place about the principles involved before we get to the details.

**[NB: WHAT FOLLOWS ASSUMES THAT A BILL OF RIGHTS INCLUDING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS IS TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD FOLLOWING DISCUSISON/CONSULTATION IN DUE COURSE, BUT THAT THERE IS A PERCIEVED NEED TO TAKE MORE URGENT ACTION TO IMPROVE THE HRA IN THE MEANTIME (AND TO AVOID THE RISK THAT DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE HRA WHICH IS NOT FOLLOWED BY IMMEDIATE ACTION IN FACT, INADVERTANTLY, PLAYS INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE – SAY AN INCOMING TORY GOVERNMENT - WHO WOULD REPEAL THE HRA BEFORE A BILL OR RIGHTS HAS BEEN PROPERLY FORMULATED AND ENACTED)]**

19. And the final of the immediate measures I am announcing today: a Bill to carry forward the work that that was started with the Human Rights Act in 1998.
  - In a moment I will explain how we will undertake consultation on the contents of a new Statement of Rights and Responsibilities – a

modern “Bill of Rights” which will build on the rights and principles set out in the Human Rights Act.

- Other parties have made proposals for a new Bill of Rights to *replace* the Human Rights Act which would leave judges the final say, giving – in practice – judges in Europe as well as Britain more power. I am today publishing a document which analyses the weaknesses of such a proposal
- But, ahead of the consultation on what should go into an expanded Bill of Rights and as one of the immediate measures I am putting in train today, I propose to bring forward an amendment to the Human Rights Act which inserts into it a preamble which explains how the individual protections afforded by the Human Rights Act are to be set in the context of our rights and obligations as members of a wider community, as envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights **[FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION]**.

The second theme underlying the immediate measures which I am announcing today reflects the need to tackle a growing sense of alienation from the democratic process and public life by engaging more people in the decisions which affect them:

20. Power should not just be devolved from the Government to Parliament but also from both to local communities whose rights must now be strengthened.
21. Too often we have thought in the old ways of the passive individual given things by the State. Now we must be aspirational. We must consider how the active citizen or the responsible parent or the informed patient can take more control over their lives.
  - In the “double devolution” which we will propose in the next Queens Speech, local people will be able to hold service providers to account, with the extended use of petitions, a community right to control, a community duty to account: the individual in the driving seat.
  - In order to ensure that everyone feels that their needs and concerns are taken into account by the people and organisations

with public power, we will place a duty on public bodies to consult and involve local people in the major decisions which affect them.

- We will consider establishing a Devolution Commissioner and a Local Service Provider Commissioner
- We will consider making extended provision for local communities to apply for devolved or delegated budgets to be spent where there is genuine local agreement and ongoing accountability
- We will consider establishing a community right to buy assets [and a community right of recall]<sup>1</sup>

Overall: a community right to decide wherever possible.

22. The regions and localities of England need a stronger voice in the deliberations of this House. We will propose to parliament that to review the economies and public services of each region, regional affairs committees for the North East, the North West, the Midlands, the South West, the East, and London will be instituted. And a Minister will be designated as Minister for each region.
23. I am proposing a new requirement for the Cabinet to meet in every part of the United Kingdom
24. In order to ensure that all communities and interest groups can properly participate in the decisions that affect all our lives, measures will be introduced to ensure greater diversity in public appointments, including a new duty on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights to monitor and report to Parliament on the diversity of public appointments, and to ensure appointment on merit.
25. [Citizen's assembly?]
26. [Votes at 16?]
27. [Party funding linked to votes?]

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<sup>1</sup> Not sure what that is



28. [Young observers in government?]
29. [A new PCC requiring the government and the media to inform the public in a balanced way?]
30. [Anything else on rejuvenating local democracy?]
31. [Anything else on voter education/civic education in schools?]
32. [Anything else on a voter registration initiative?]

I believe that these immediate steps are the very least that we must do to begin to respond to the challenges we now face. But on their own they fall far short of the bold and coherent steps I believe we now need to take as a society to face the future together with a renewed sense of common purpose and clarity.

Two of the most famous declarations of the people of this country – the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights - restricted the power of the monarchy to act in an arbitrary way.

Today, the challenge we must address is not the power of the Monarchy, but the power of the executive Government and the scope for it to act in an arbitrary way.

And the driving forces for change are not the demands of the Barons or a few Lords and commoners, but the needs and requirements for all our rights. We must respond to the demand from every part of our land that we could do more in this generation to ensure that the rights of individuals should be fully respected and that proper trust in government should be restored and entrenched.

In short: It is time our constitutional arrangements reflected this new and rightly more challenging world

We are known throughout the world as the land of the Magna Carta. But, unlike most other democracies, we have no written statement of the rights of individuals and of the responsibilities we all owe to each other – what we

might call "a British Bill of Rights" - nor a written statement of the ground rules on which our democracy is based: who decides what and how *in Britain*.

Many would say that we have been well served by our "unwritten constitution". However, even most clubs, let alone modern democratic countries, have a written framework or constitution which describes how decisions are made, and by whom, and which protects those affected by those decisions.

It has become increasingly clear to me that to achieve the goal of a united society and a transparent democracy, we urgently need an inclusive process to identify the core values that we share, and the principles and ground rules by which decisions are made which affect people's lives. And, perhaps most importantly, we need to express those core values, principles and ground rules in a way that provides the cornerstone for future progress.

Establishing this long-term framework for renewing our national purpose will not be easy. It cannot be achieved by any single institutional reform or change of policy. It will require a process which must engage us all in articulating the core values that define us as a country of different nations and origins and of varying lifestyles and opinions.

It will be a challenging journey. But the prize is a noble one: the distillation of the very best of our shared and diverse traditions and aspirations into a set of values that unite us, and equip us to respond to the threats and challenges we face today. Values that will guide our future actions and release the potential of our traditions to transform our future, rather than root us in the past.

I am proud of the constitutional reform measures which Parliament has enacted, on the initiative of the Labour Government, since 1997, especially Devolution, the Human Rights Act, and Freedom of Information.

But, for the reasons I have outlined today, we have reached a point in our country's history when we need to move beyond them and put them in their wider context as part a wider framework of who decides what and how.

I have already mentioned the need to bring together a British understanding of our shared core values such as liberty, responsibility and fairness and to take immediate steps to take forward what was started with the Human Rights Act.

I would hope that we could draw these basic themes together in a statement of rights and enduring values **[NB POTENTIALLY THE PREAMBLE, AND INTERPRETATIVE CLAUSE, TO A BILL OF RIGHTS]** which we should publicly celebrate, for example by making them part of the foundation of all public services, including, for example, teaching in our schools.

I believe that those values, and the process of defining them together, should reduce the alienation felt by those people who do not feel part of our society and who are motivated to kill and maim their fellow citizens as a result.

But values on their own are not enough to address the growing lack of trust and engagement in politics which should worry us all. We need also to consider the basic ground rules by which we would like to be governed and the possibility of a new, written, constitution setting out those rules clearly and accessibly.

I would hope that we can agree that principles of accountability, transparency, participation and access to information will underpin those ground rules and facilitate a stronger engagement in the democratic process.

We also need to ensure that the local voice is properly heard in decisions that affect people where they live, on matters such as policing, housing, transport, education and health care.

Reaching agreement on our core values and most basic rules would also help us to identify the concrete commitments which I believe we can, or should, now regard as fundamental bedrocks of our society such as: **[NB NEEDS TO TRACK THE RIGHTS, INCLUDING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS, INCLUDED WITHIN THE DRAFT BILL OF RIGHTS]**

1. our commitment to provide access to healthcare free for all at the point of use,
2. access to non-selective education freely available to all,

3. a sustainable approach to the environment in which we live and of which we are custodians for our children and grandchildren – it is fundamental that development meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
4. the provision of services to protect the most vulnerable such as the socially excluded, the young, and the elderly in a manner which will enable them to thrive and participate as full and active members of the community,
5. ensuring that disabled people have a meaningful right to independent living, as well as enhancing the rights and entitlements of the thousands of carers who spend a large proportion of their lives looking after others,
6. a commitment to internationalism which allows us to take pride in leading by example across the world,
7. and society's responsibility to work constantly towards achieving goals such as full employment and the elimination of poverty, particularly child poverty,

I am today publishing a draft framework of rights/statement of rights and responsibilities to lead this important debate: a British Statement of Rights and Responsibilities founded on enduring British values around which we can unite and which will make us proud to be British - a beacon for the rights of individuals not just in this country, but in every country; and a beacon for good, accountable, democratic government, not just here but everywhere.

That debate and the shared pride I hope it can create, may also, in time, allow us to reclaim and celebrate the flag of the United Kingdom as a symbol which unites us all.

**[NB NEXT BIT CONTEMPLATES DISCUSSION ABOUT WHETHER, AND IF SO HOW (ETC) WE SHOULD FORMULATE A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION]**

But Mr/Madam Speaker I also believe it is time to apply our principles more profoundly to consider longer term changes to our constitution.

I believe there is a strong case for a concordat between the Government and Parliament which sets down - for each generation - the proper sphere of the responsibilities and powers of each.

But it may be right to go even further.

Our constitution is not of course unwritten: it is, however, assembled in a succession of Acts and other documents, and not one.

Now that three of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom have already written constitutions, it is also right and timely to ask whether the whole of the United Kingdom should have a written constitution

Defining a new constitutional settlement would allow us to build on the significant progress we have made in modernising our democracy in the last few years. It would bring coherence and renewed energy to the various constitutional reforms that we have embarked upon. And it would ensure that all such reforms serve the overarching purpose of reinvigorating our democracy.

Overall, that package will put us in the strongest possible position when, together, we take on the challenges which we collectively face including those I have mentioned: the alienation of some in our Country, the process of reform and the emergence of a constitution across the EU, lack of trust in the political process and the social and economic insecurities generated by global developments.

I have so far described what immediate steps will be taken by this Government to reinvigorate our democracy and the journey I believe we should now embark upon.

To start this process we first of all need a national debate about the values which we hold to be fundamental to our society, and a consultation process about the more concrete statements of rights and responsibilities which should give expression to those commonly held values, as well as the ground rules for a possible new constitutional settlement.

Out of that dialogue I hope will emerge a new understanding of our national identity.

The result may well be a new, British Bill of Rights and a written constitution for Britain.



If it is to be effective this process must be inclusive and respect key principles of engagement and transparency including:

- The importance of arriving at a broad consensus in society at large
- The need for cross-party involvement
- The importance of consulting the public at local as well as national level.
- The central place of Parliament in carrying through any constitutional change.
- A strict one year time limit on the length of the consultation process

Over the next three months, I will consult with the party leaders, and others, about how, precisely, this process should be carried through. I urge people throughout the country, and from all walks of life, to comment on the ideas I have expressed and the proposals I have put before you.

National renewal is a great endeavour, but it will come to nothing unless the process truly involves the people.

Mr/Madam Speaker, tomorrow I propose to make a further statement to the House setting out new economic measures that will further empower men and women throughout the land

[Ends]